

raise cattle, sheep, and turkeys in Canyon del Muerto. He didn't attend school until age 14. "I barely knew a word of English," he said. At that time, the reservation's U.S. Government-run boarding school in Fort Wingate, NM, punished students for speaking Navajo. Time after time, "I had to kneel in the corner," he said, and he tried to run away.

The Marines recruited Mr. Draper from high school to join the Navajo code talkers. He served in the Fifth Marine Division and fought at Iwo Jima.

Iwo Jima was a critically strategic battle for the Allies. The island served as a Japanese air base and safe haven for naval units, and the Allies wanted to secure it to support bombing missions and emergency air landings. During the first 2 days of the 36-day battle, six Navajo code talkers worked around the clock, sending and receiving more than 800 messages—all without error. According to Marine division signal officer Major Howard Connor, "Were it not for the Navajo, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima."

During the battle, a bomb on Mount Suribachi killed two of his fellow soldiers and cost Mr. Draper most of his hearing. Atop that same mount, Mr. Draper radioed, on February 25, 1945, "We have raised the flag; we have taken the hill." The "first raising of the flag" on Mount Suribachi is famously memorialized in a wartime photograph and by the Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, VA.

After the war, Mr. Draper volunteered for occupation duty, and became so fluent in Japanese that he served as an interpreter. Mr. Draper said, "When I was going to boarding school, the U.S. government told us not to speak Navajo, but during the war, they wanted us to speak it!" During combat, he determined that "if I can get back to the reservation safely, I want to become a Navajo language teacher and educate young Navajos." That is exactly what he did. Mr. Draper dedicated himself to preserving the Navajo language—Diné bizaad—teaching many years at Rough Rock Community High School. He lacked teaching materials, and so he created his own, producing a curriculum and two workbooks that continue to be the staple of many Navajo language classes today.

Despite his loss of hearing from the war, Mr. Draper was not awarded the Purple Heart until 2004, after years of appeals. In 2001, he received the Congressional Silver Medal, along with other Navajo code talkers. In 2013, he received the Arizona Indian Living Treasures Award.

Mr. Draper leaves 12 children, 57 grandchildren, and more than 20 great-grandchildren. Mr. Draper also leaves a remarkable legacy of commitment to country and community, and I honor his life today.

REMEMBERING PEDRO GONZALEZ

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to Pedro Gonzalez—a brave World War II veteran who endured the Bataan Death March and 3½ years in captivity in the Philippines and in Japan. Mr. Gonzalez passed away January 6, 2018, at the age of 96.

Mr. Gonzalez was born in Las Cruces, NM, and later moved to Los Lunas, where he graduated from high school. Shortly after graduation, in 1940, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps. He was assigned to the 19th Bombardment Group in the Philippines.

On December 8, 1941—7 hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor—Japanese bombers attacked U.S. military stations in the Philippines. Mr. Gonzalez had learned earlier that they had attacked Hawaii, and, when he first heard planes that morning, he thought there were U.S. reinforcements. They were not.

Mr. Gonzalez and American troops fought valiantly to defend the Philippines, but they ran low on ammunition, supplies, food, and manpower and were forced to surrender in April 1942. Fifteen thousand Americans and 60,000 Filipinos were taken prisoner.

These prisoners of war then began the 60-mile long Bataan Death March. Mr. Gonzalez was only 20 years old. He recalled they had "no food, no water," that men were beaten and beheaded, and bodies were strewn in the road. During the march, one of his commanding officers told him, "Pete, you keep that smile on your face and you're gonna make it back." During part of the journey, the men were hauled in box cars, packed as tight as could be. Mr. Gonzalez stood right at the edge of the door and survived, but it was said that five to six of the men in his boxcar died.

Mr. Gonzalez suffered cerebral malaria, dengue, beriberi, shrapnel wounds, a broken back, a dislocated knee, and broken fingers but he survived the years of captivity. After he returned home, he was awarded a Silver Star for valor in combat and two Purple Hearts for his injuries.

I had the privilege of meeting Mr. Gonzalez during filming of a local Public Broadcasting Corporation documentary honoring the 70th anniversary of the Bataan fall. He was a gentle, soft-spoken man who was humble about the bravery and fortitude he exhibited during those harsh years.

After the war, Mr. Gonzalez moved to Albuquerque, began a family, and worked at what was then called Sandia Base, which later merged with Kirtland Air Force Base. After, he worked for the Department of Defense as an inventory specialist for nuclear weapons and as a financial officer for different branches of the military, retiring in the 1980s. After retirement, he stayed involved with veterans' organizations and served as local commander of a chapter of former prisoners of war.

Mr. Gonzalez is preceded in death by his wife and is survived by two sons and their spouses.

Mr. Gonzalez is part of American and New Mexico history. He fought for his country and, through bravery, determination, and grit, survived the brutality of the Bataan Death March and captivity. I honor all that Pedro Gonzalez achieved and experienced to preserve international peace and stability.

REMEMBERING DAVID EARL PATTERSON, SR.

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I wish to honor David Earl Patterson, Sr., a man who gave selflessly to his family, the Navajo Nation, and his country.

Mr. Patterson was born November 11, 1922. He was Tachil'nii—Red Running Into the Water People Clan, born for Kinlichii'nii—the Red House People Clan. He attended Catholic school in Shiprock NM, and remained a devout Catholic his entire life.

Mr. Patterson entered the U.S. Marine Corps in 1943 and was one of about 400 Navajo code talkers trained on radio communications. He served in the Marshall Islands, the islets of Roi and Namur, the Kwajalein Atoll, Saipan, and Iwo Jima. Navajo code talkers played a critical role in the Battle of Iwo Jima. During the first 2 days of the battle, the marines had six Navajo code talkers who worked around the clock during the first 2 days of the battle. They sent and received over 800 messages, all without error. Their marine commander said later, "Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima." Mr. Patterson received an honorable discharge in 1945.

Mr. Patterson was humble about his wartime contribution to our Nation and did not talk much about his World War II experience. The United States honored him and his fellow Navajo code talkers with the Congressional Silver Medal of Honor in 2001.

After the war, Mr. Patterson married Marion Patterson, and they raised seven children. He was a beloved husband, father, and grandfather.

He attended college in Oklahoma and New Mexico and became a social worker for the Navajo Nation until his retirement in 1987, working decades for the welfare of his people. Even after retirement, he served until 2012 as a foster parent in the Shiprock schools until 2012.

Mr. Patterson was a passionate bowler, a baseball aficionado, and a bingo player. Bowling at every New Mexico bowling center was on his bucket list, and he found time to coach Little League Baseball and Softball in Shiprock.

Mr. Patterson lived a full and generous life until his passing on October 8, 2017 at age 94. He was one of the last surviving Navajo code talkers.

I am honored to pay tribute to Mr. Patterson, a family man and a hero who never stopped giving to his community and people.